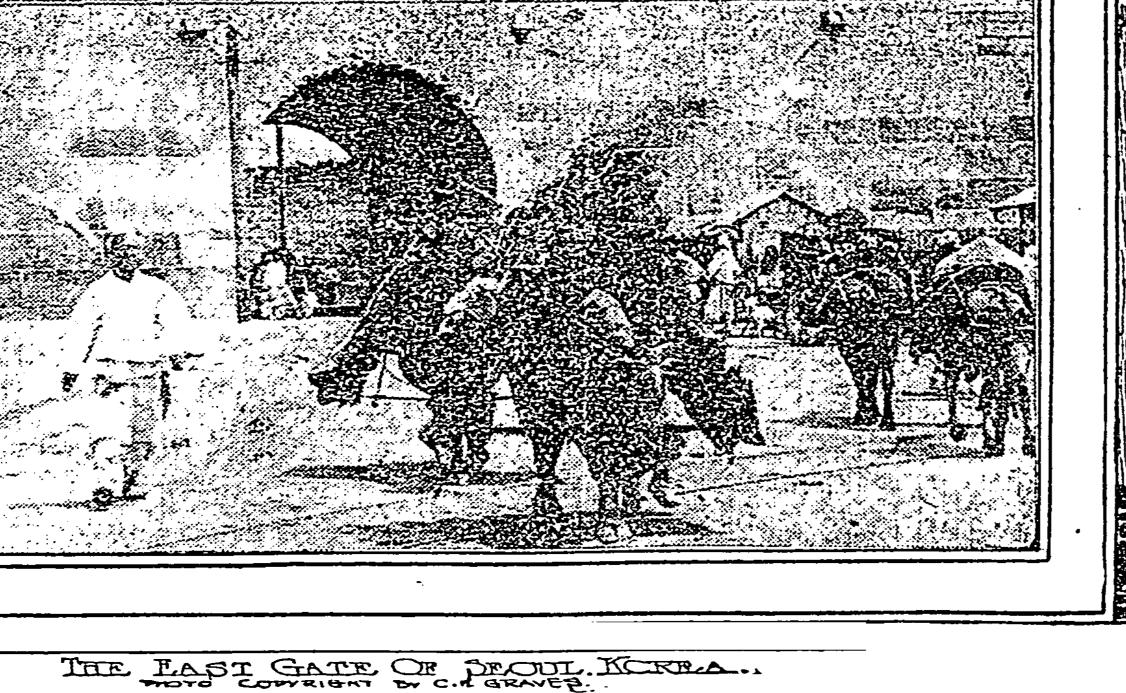
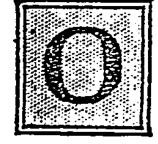
THE OBLITERATION OF THE KINGDOM OF KOREA

With Complete Disregard of Her Promises Preceding the Russian War, Japan Abolishes the Emperor of That Nation and Places a Marionette Upon the Throne. By STEPHEN BONSAL.









T in Korea, once the Hermit Kingdom, but in the last decade the favored scene upon which the pawns in the game of world politics have strut-

ted about during their little day, things seem to be getting into a phase which approaches finality. Without any more regard for her ante-bellum promises than if she were a great European power, the ambitious island empire of the Eastern seas abolishes the Emperor for whose independence she fought Russia, or said she did, and places upon the marionette throne a poor young Prince who has been an admitted imbecile these many years.

The plots and counter-plots which have centred about the Korean throne during the last thirty years are full of human interest of the mediaeval Italian order. There is much passing of poisoned cups and pin-pricking with slender poisoned stilettos. Now and again the explosion of a dynamite bomb gives to the story a dash of the days

in which we Westerners live. The abolished King Yi, if that's his hame. (for my part I have always found the Koreans very secretive about the royal particle,) was called to the throne when a mere lad, as far back as 1863but, as the kinglet was soon to learn. the throne has very little to do with the King business. It is merely so much stage furniture, and the royal seal is the all-important accessory to the part The little Yi was not much of a King then, for he never caught sight of the royal seal, except the impression of it upon proclamations from the throne, which he had never made, for the first twenty years of his reign. The seal and the reins of real power remained during this period in the hands of the Dowager Empress Cho (or as some Koreans have her, Chu,) and in those of the King's father, the National Grand Duke, or Tai-Wun-Kun, by far the most infamous and, alas that it should be so, certainly the most interesting character in recent Korean his-

, The National Grand Duke was a

younger brother of the late King, the lamented consort of the Queen Cho. and he ardently desired to rule, but the Korean laws of succession were very explicit on this point. A new King cannot be of the same generation as his predecessor, there must always be progression in the royal line. However, while he bowed to precedent and custom, the Tai-Wun-Kun in secret decided to play anything but an effaced rôle, and the Queen Cho for a time at least aided and abetted him. Then rifts appeared in the perfect understanding which had reigned so long between the twain. In his perplexity the National Grand Duke contrived a state stroke which, though it promised him permanence in power, was his undoing and the primary cause of his long years of exile. Feeling uncertain of the continued favor of the Queen Dowager, the National Grand Duke and Prince Parent, as he now came to be called in recognition of the paternal vigilance with which he looked after the interests of his kingly son, decided upon a new Queen, and took steps to secure one wholly devoted to his interests.

How Kings Marry in Korea. Kingly marriage in Korea is neither more nor less of a lottery than it is elsewhere, only the method of challenging fate is different. All the eligible maidens in the kingdom were bidden to the palace, and then happy Prince Charming made his choice, of course. No! That is the way it is in the fairy tales, but not in real life, not even in Korea, which in former days, at least, so closely bordered on fairy lands. All the maidens selected by the provincial Governors of the kingdoms assembled in the tea pavilion outside the palace by the lotos pond. They stood attentive to please, as the unwed King followed by the Court walked in and out inspecting the bevies of beauty who appeared, according to the ancient Korean custom, with bared breasts. Suddenly at a signal from the Court Chamberlain, all the aspirant brides sat down, or more exactly speaking, squatted upon embroid-

ered cushions which had been carefully arranged in circles for this crucial moment. All the maidens squatted gracefully, of course, it goes without saying, because they were all highly bred maiders worthy of a King's hand and couch, but a second later one of them, for the moment happiest among women, sprang in the air as though stung by an adder. No, that could not be, as her face was suffused with smiles, and a joy which even Oriental etiquette could not sup-

press reddened her cheeks. A moment later this maiden of the Min family held aloft in her right hand with triumphal gesture a golden goblet, placed by fate, as some said, by the Prince Parent, as all knew, in the cushion upon which she sat. Twenty years later the Queen of the Mins was murdered and her mangled remains drenched with kerosene were burned not 100 yards from the palace pavilion, where, by the ordeal of the goblet, directed by the Prince Parent, she had been proclaimed Queen. While the hand that struck down the defenseless woman was that of a Japanese hireling, there was, there never has been any doubt in the minds of those whose knowledge of crime and perfidy has been broadened by a sojourn at the Korean Court, that in each instance, at the marriage and at the midnight murder, the guiding spirit and the directing hand was that of the ruthless Prince Parent.

The story of Korea during the twenty years between the Queen's marriage and her murder is simply the story of the feud to the death, and after, between the Prince Parent and the Lady Min, whose strong will, much to the dismay of the Prince Parent, asserted itself well before the remains of the marriage feast were cleared away. It has been said that Korea never had a King, but that the Min family ruled the land through the Queen, who was devoted to their interests. In the course of the Queen's reign then, as we may properly call it, the life and the death of politics was the feud between her and the Prince Parent. That he surwived to die quietly in his bed a few

years ago shows what an adroit old fox the National Grand Duke really was. In the skirmishes of assassination which took place between him and the reigning lady, determined to rule, her father and two brothers were killed, and her nephew, though cut to pieces by a hundred swords, survived. Nor is it to be supposed that the National Grand Duke escaped quite scathless. On one occasion a bomb placed under his sleeping stove blew him high in the air. The bones in both his legs were, broken by the explosion or the fall, and physically he was never so spry as he had been before. Mentally, however, his murderous temper remained unimpaired to his dying day. After this failure to convert the Prince Parent into an ancestral tablet and give him a Seoul name, the Mins, and perhaps it is fair to say, the Queen, tired of mere lethal weapons which had proved so inefficacious, and resorted to

strategy and spoils.

The moment the growing antagonism between China and Japan began to cause ripples in the seas adjacent to the Land of the Morning Calm, the Queen Min showed strong Chinese sympathies. So did the National Grand Duke, however. The Chinese representative at the time in Korea informed his Government that the Queen was the most important factor in the situation and that she would keep the country in line as a satellite of Mother China if only her hated enemy and rival, the National Grand Duke, could be spirited away. A few weeks after this a Chinese man-o'-war appeared off the coast, and the commanding officer invited the National Grand Duke on board to take a cup of tea. While the tea was still brewing the National Grand Duke noticed that the ship was getting under way. Several days later, the King Sing or lucky star being in the ascendant. the vessel reached the China Coast where the Prince Parent spent many years in exile to the great happiness of his children and grandchildren. During this interlude, though, there was the bean war and the rebellion of the Toughaks, peace may be said to have

brooded approximately over the Land of the Morning Calm. But the muse of tragedy got busy when, during the war between China and Japan, the National Grand Duke was allowed to return to his native

> and bloodthirstiness boiling in his bosom. Of these crimes I shall only speak of the murder of the Queen, because I reached the capital only a few hours after it happened, and saw the King while he still shuddered with the memory of the terrible night he had passed and while he still felt at his feet the hands of his murdered Minister. who in his death agony crawled to his King's closet and asked for mercy and

> land with all his hoardings of hatred

protection. What happened on that fateful night of Oct. 8, 1895, has been related many times and in many ways. The essential facts are that Japanese troops surrounded the palace grounds and held the populace and the loyal troops in check, that Korean troops trained and officered by Japanese broke down the gates, and that a horde of Japanese soldiers together with a number of Soshi or unattached adventurers rushed in, and under the guidance of men attached to the Japanese Legation made their way to the pavilion where the Queen slept. Her Majesty, aroused by the tumult in the city, had apparently a fair opportunity to escape. Indeed, it is reported that she had already found a safe refuge in the vast park, when her maternal instinct, her idolatry for the imbecile boy whom the

| Japanese would now proclaim Emperor brought her back to the palace where

The killing of the Queen and the pursuit of her adherents by the Japanese continued throughout the night. About twenty prominent officials took refuge in the American legation from the short sharp swords of the Japanese assassins and were saved. Gen. Miura, the Japanese Minister, was apparently the only man in Seoul who slept that dreadful night. However, about daybreak, he was aroused and urged to do so by the representations of the American and Russian Ministers, marched to the palace with more troops, and took possession. Shortly after his arrival the carnival of murder ceased, but for several days marked men who had escaped in the midnight mêlée were quietly killed wherever found, and each and every one of these were men opposed to the Japanese policy of practical annexation in Korea, which to-day has at last been realized.

An Audience with the King of Korea. I shall never forget the first audience we had with the distracted King after this red-handed incident. The audience was insisted upon by all the members of the Diplomatic Corps despite the opposition of the Japanese Minister. At this time the fate of the Queen was still veiled in mystery. Some said she had been murdered, but the King still clung to the hope that she had made good her escape disguised as a dancing girl out of the city. Then,

she met her death.

and indeed for months, Court etiquette, prevented any mention of recent occura rences being made to the King in the course of our audiences, and the only purpose they served was to furnish somewhat slender moral support to this most unfortunate of men. Day after day, and night after night, he lived with no better protection from the Japanese murderers than that which had proved so inefficacious the night the poor

The King received us then as ever

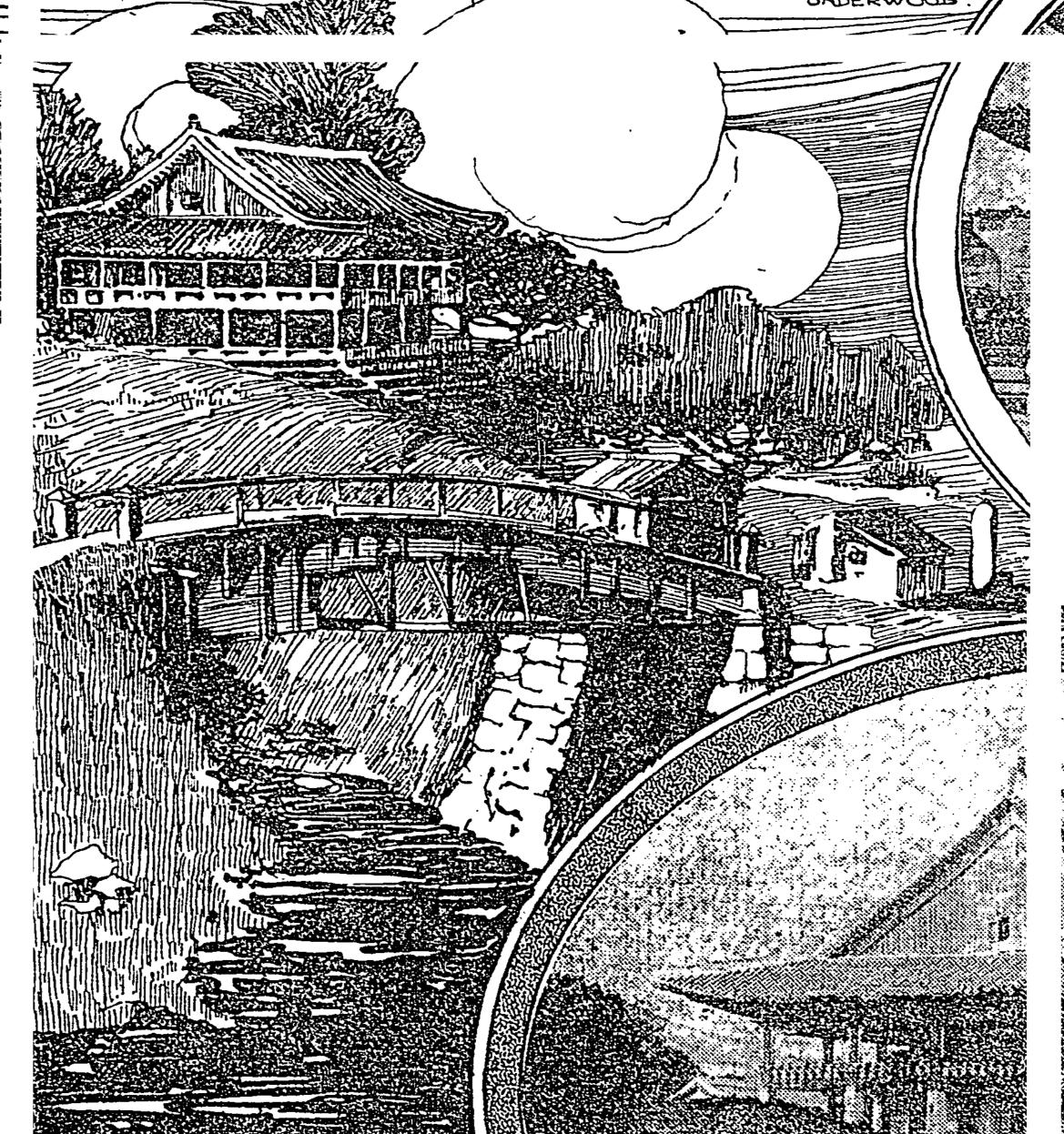
Queen met her death.

ON THE ARTIFICIAL

LAKE IN THE OLD SECUL

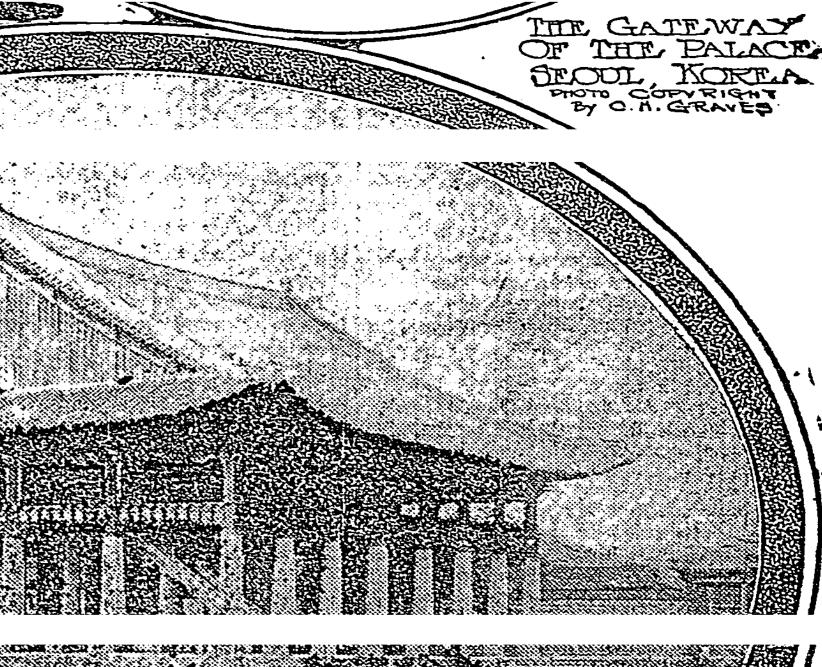
until all the old Korean customs were abolished, standing upon a dais and behind a curtain supported by his son, then a fat, oyster-eyed, imbecile little boy of about fifteen, who punctuated the conventional conversation with high quavering laughter. The curtain rose and the King advanced toward us. For the first time in Court annals he shook everybody by the hand. He was trembling and perspiring violently, poor little mannikin! There were many there who would have liked to have thrown diplomatic privileges and diplomatic responsibilities to the winds and stood by him as men and not as diplomats. I say the curtain rose, but it rose only in the middle, both the wings of the stage upon which the spectacle of the trembling King and the imbedile boy' was presented were curtained off. but through this curtain were silhouetted the face and figure of the Prince Parent and some of his Japanese assoclates. With their shadow across the audience no wonder the King trembled. I have always thought, as indeed did













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CITIC VANISHING "LAND OF THE MORNING CALM"

The Exiled Monarch Will Probably Join the Former King of Foo-Choo Islands in Tokio.

all the foreigners present in Seoul at the moment, that the two brave American missionaries who slept across the King's threshold that night and for many succeeding ones saved his life.

It was in May, 1883, as a result of Admiral Rodgers's expedition, Commodore Shugfeldt, commanding the American fleet at Chemulpo, drew up the first treaty between Korea and the United States. In the following year, Min Yong-ik, a nephew of the Queen, headed an embassy to the United States—from that day to this the relations between the two countries have been of the closest. American advisers have always been employed by the Korean court, and in following in turn her counsel of Capt. Foote, Gen. Legendre, Gen. Greathouse, and Gen. Dye, all Americans, who had, before entering Korean service, held high rank in the American Government, the Koreans undoubtedly believed that they were obeying the wishes of the Administration in Washington and that this obedience placed our Government under the obligation to intercede, and, if necessity arose, to intervene in favor of the once Hermit Kingdom should the course which its Government adopted at our suggestion that their somewhat cranky Junk of State into troubled waters,

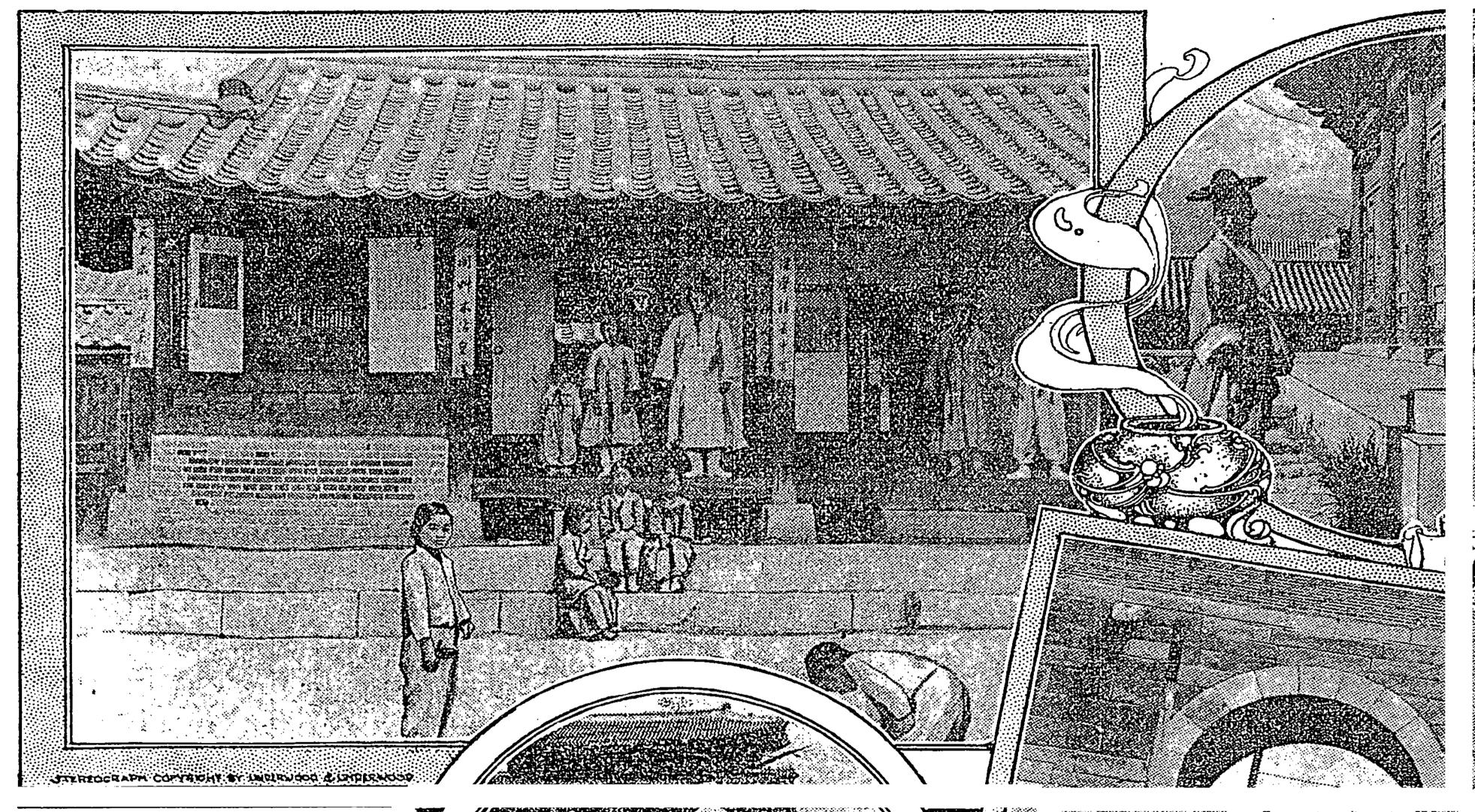
So we were the first western power to conclude a treaty with Korea, and in making that treaty we seem to have guaranteed her safety and interests-indeed in a Korean version of this document, which has been widely read and commented upon in the distracted peninsula during the last six months, we are represented as having entered into a solemn compact to maintain the integrity of the Korean dominions and to sustain the royal house against all comers—doubtless Commodore Schufeldt did not go as far as this, but he went very far, and the treaty was confirmed by the Senate—it cannot legally be abrogated by any arrangement between President Roosevelt and the Japanese Foreign Office.

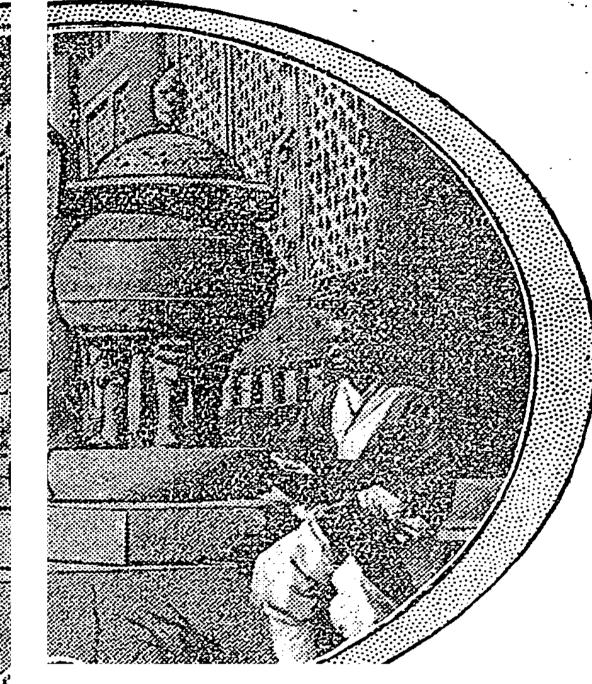
Doubtless when the Korean Embassy, which has been refused a hearing at the Hague, reaches Washington the long-forgotten and probably never very

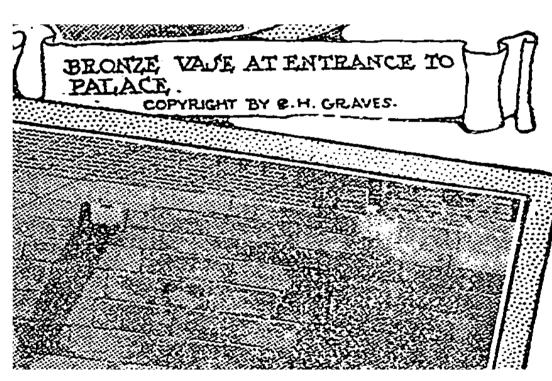
closely scanned treaty which the sailordiplomat made will be found in the archives of the State Department and the legal status of our responsibilities ascertained. Morally, there can be no doubt, we are bound to go to considerable lengths in our endeavor to secure a "square deal" for our Asiatic protegée. There is, to be sure, much evidence to show that the Koreans, at least of the ruling caste, are incapable of carrying on a civilized government. the King who was forced to abdicate last week by the direct interference of Marquis Ito, though intelligent and kindly, in a reign of over forty years did little for his people. But the question may well be asked, will the Japanese Government do any more. For nearly twelve years now by the right of conquest and usurpation the Japanese have from time to time exercised sovereignty in Korea.

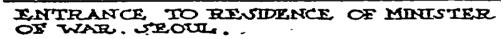
Their most prominent agents have been the late Mr. Hoshi Toru and Gen. Miura. Hosti when he returned to Tokio and endeavored to introduce the system of graft and corruption which had characterized his official conduct in Seoul was promptly assinated, and Gen. Miura was sent to prison for making possible, if he did not actually inspire, the horrible murder of the anti-Japanese Queen. Undoubtedly at times the intentions of the Tokio Government have been honorable and a sincere attempt made to elevate Korean morals and the bureaucratic ideals of the slothful Yangbans. However, almost invariably the men chosen for the difficult task have added by their activity but little honor to the warlike halo of the rising sun banner.

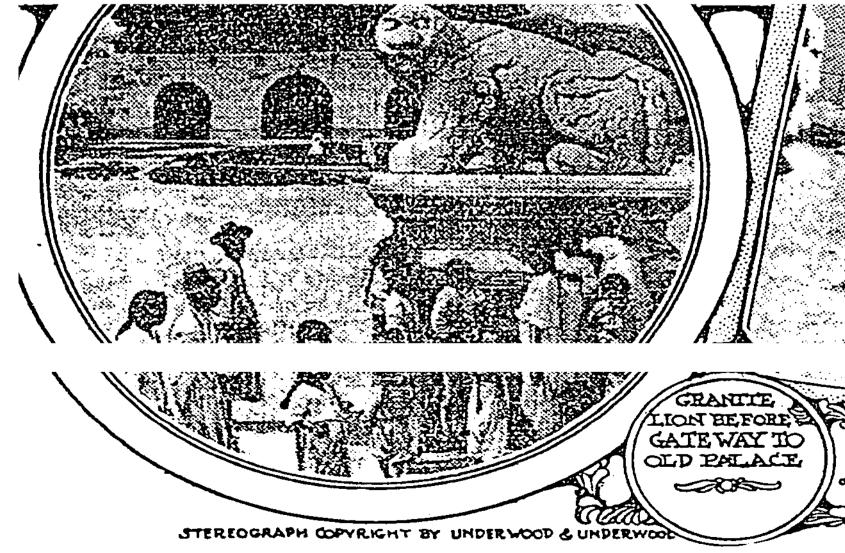
The political chances would seem to be in favor of the early removal of the Emperor of Korea to Tokio, where he could play royalty in exile with the former King of the Foo-Choo Islands, the last of a royal line with whom Commodore Perry made a treaty of peace, amity and commerce some months before his memorable entry into Yeddo Bay and the closed world of Japan. With the head of their royal house in exile or a prisoner the sleeping Koreans may be aroused to the dangers of what













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